

Susan Harris II

MARY HARTMAN,
MARY HARTMAN

EPISODE #41

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by

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FINAL DRAFT
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARY	LOUISE LASSER
TOM	GREG MULLAVEY
MARTHA	DODY GOODMAN
GEORGE	PHIL BRUNS
GRANDPA	VICTOR KILIAN
CATHY	DEBRALEE SCOTT
STEVE	ED BEGLEY, JR.
BLANCHE FEDDERS	REVA ROSE
CLETE MEIZENHEIMER	MIKE LEMBECK
SWEENEY	
MORTICIAN	
SHERI (CALL GIRL)	

SETS

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ACT ONESCENE 1TV STUDIO - NIGHT

CLETE MEIZENHEIMER ACTING AS ANCHOR-
MAN FOR THE EVENING, COPY IN HAND,
BEAMING PERSONALITY AT THE CAMERA.

CLETE

... Secret service spokesmen continued to claim that the President did not trip, but, rather, was calling his dog, Liberty, when he walked into the oval office door. (FLIPS A PAGE) Now, turning to local news, a tragic story at the top of the page -- Fernwood High School Athletic Coach, Leroy Fedders, is dead tonight at the age of 47, victim of bizarre household accident. He is reported to have drowned -- that's right, drowned -- in a bowl of chicken soup. The coach had been suffering from a mild respiratory infection, for which a neighbor had prescribed chicken soup. Fedders, who had also been taking seconal to sleep and liquor for his cough, evidently fell face down in his soup bowl.

(MORE)

CLETE (CONT'D)

Fortunately, all traces of chicken bones had been removed so no cuts or contusions resulted. Fedders was pronounced dead on arrival at Fernwood Receiving. Surviving Coach Fedders are his wife, Blanche, and one daughter, a runaway since 1971, who couldn't be reached for comment.

SCENE 2SHUMWAY KITCHEN

(MARTHA, GRANDPA, AND TOM SITTING
AROUND THE SET)

CLETE (O.S.)

In other sports tonight, The Fernwood High Huganots met the Montrose Mean Machine and it was --

TOM TURNING OFF THE SET.

MARTHA

I don't think the picture's brighter. I think we're going to need a new tube.

GRANDPA

Whatcha turn it off for?

TOM

Just the weather coming up next.

GRANDPA

I like the weather. That's my favorite part. Where they draw faces on the clouds --

MARTHA

Tom's upset, Pa.

TOM

Well, not upset exactly.

MARTHA

It's only natural. You were on his team when you were in high school. I remember Mary used to watch you. And then, of course, they were our neighbors.

GRANDPA

Miserable so-and-so --

MARTHA

Pa!

GRANDPA

Always used to turn his sprinklers on just when I was taking my evening walk. (HALF BEAT) That's why I started wearing that raincoat!

MARTHA

How's Mary taking it, Tom?

TOM

Not so good. She's feeling guilty because it was her chicken soup. That's why she volunteered to go along with Blanche to make the funeral arrangements. She felt the coach'd still be alive if she hadn't seen that sale on fresh-plucked chickens at Federated.

MARTHA

But like they were saying on the news --
bizarre accidents in the home are a major
health hazard. I read about a man who died
of heat prostration from falling asleep on
a couch covered with aluminum foil. Of
course, that's not as bizarre as drowning
in a bowl of soup! (STARTING TO SNIFFLE)
Oh, poor Blanche!

TOM RISES.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Tom, where are you going?

TOM

I told Mary I'd try to round up some of
the guys who used to be on the coach's
team -- see if they could help Blanche now
that she needs them.

MARTHA

Oh, that's sweet.

TOM

And don't you let yourself get too depressed.

MARTHA

No, I won't. I think I'll just call George
though, to tell him what's happened.

GRANDPA

Talk about someone who can depress you in
five minutes --

TOM

See you later, Grandpa.

MARTHA

Bye, Tom. (DIALING)

GRANDPA

Probably take him a week to find three guys --

MARTHA

Hello? George Shumway's room, please. (TO
GRANDPA) I figure he'll be at the hotel.

Poor Mary. It really wasn't her fault.

She could just as easily have cooked him
some fish and have him choke to death on
a bone. (BACK ON THE PHONE) He isn't?

Well, do you know where I can reach him?

Well, did he leave a message? Are you
sure? This is his wife. Well, then just
tell him I called and could he call me
when he gets in? Thank you. (HANGS UP)

GRANDPA

Probably jumping into cakes with naked girls.

MARTHA

That's out of cakes, and George has too
much bursitis in his knees to jump. But
I wonder where he is?

GRANDPA

Nothing to worry about, Martha. He probably
just took off with the union health and welfare
fund and we'll never have to see him again!
(BIG GRIN)

MARTHA

Oh, stop that, Pa. Haven't we got enough problems? Coach Fedders losing his life in a bowl of Mary's soup. Mary so guilty she may never cook again. (BEAT) Lord, everything's so complicated in the home these days, it's a wonder everybody just doesn't eat out.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWOFEDDERS LIVING ROOM

MARY AND BLANCHE, BLANCHE IS COOL
AND STOICAL, MARY'S CRYING HER HEART
OUT.

MARY

I just can't help it.

BLANCHE

It's not your fault, Mary.

MARY

But I gave it to him! I set it down in
front of him. I told him it was the best
thing in the world for him.

BLANCHE

But that doesn't mean you killed him.

MARY

I know. My soup did that. But I'm an
accomplice.

BLANCHE

Mary, that's not true.

MARY

Of course it is, Blanche. I bought the
soup greens. I picked out the plumpest
chicken. (CRIES) Oh, my God! I've never
been responsible for a death before!

BLANCHE

And you're not responsible for Leroy's.

I don't blame you.

MARY

You don't?

BLANCHE

He was drinking -- and he was popping sleeping pills. I warned him -- but he got so zonked that he couldn't keep up his head.

MARY

Still, he'd be with us today if I hadn't put that bowl of soup where his head could plop in it. (SHE SOBS FOR A BEAT, THEN LOOKS UP AT BLANCHE QUESTIONINGLY) Blanche -- I don't mean to embarrass you or anything... but may I ask you a personal question?

BLANCHE

Sure.

MARY

Your eyes aren't even wet. You haven't cried once.

BLANCHE

You know, that's true.

MARY

It must be the shock --

BLANCHE

No.

MARY

You just don't realize your loss yet.

BLANCHE

I realize it. I've been thinking to myself
... "Blanche Fedders, widow." You know,
like you think "Mrs. Joe Doakes," when
you're planning to marry someone and you
try to imagine how it would look on a
napkin.

MARY

You're thinking of putting "Mrs. Blanche
Fedders, widow" on a napkin?

BLANCHE

No.

MARY

Oh, Blanche -- I hope you just don't break
down completely!

BLANCHE

No chance. For awhile last night, I kept
wondering when it was going to hit me.
Leroy is dead. And then I realized, it
had hit me. Oh, I'm sorry he's gone,
don't misunderstand --

MARY

Oh, I wouldn't, no! You loved him.

BLANCHE

Well, not exactly. We just sort of tolerated
each other. I mean, he'd say he loved me...

(MORE)

BLANCHE (CONT'D)

... on our anniversary and like that...
but neither one of us ever got goose-pimples
about it. I guess I'll miss him.

MARY

You will... definitely... you will!

BLANCHE

But I miss being in the girl scouts, too.

MARY

It's not the same.

BLANCHE

He wasn't a very warm man. I used to be
warm. A lot warmer than I am now. Like
last night. I went into our room for the
first time since he...

MARY

In the chicken soup.

BLANCHE

Yes. And I sat alone on the edge of the
bed in the quiet and everything, and I
thought for sure the water works would
start -- that's what Leroy would call them
when we were newlyweds and I'd cry over
a burnt roast or something. -- But they
didn't. I just started noticing that the
drapes were beginning to fray a little, and
then I cleared off some clutter on the dresser
top. And I realized that was all that was on
my mind, and I felt nothing.

MARY

That is normal. I don't want you for a minute to think that is not normal. When I was a little girl at my grandmother's funeral at the graveside... and I looked up because I thought I'd be able to see her soul somewhere in the air... but all I saw was this cloud, and it looked like a kangaroo. I mean, I'd never seen a kangaroo. So I started thinking about Australia and kiwi birds... while all my relatives were standing around sobbing. I felt so guilty!

BLANCHE

But you cried later.

MARY

Well, when we got home and I sat in her rocking chair.

BLANCHE

You see, I won't.

MARY

You will.

BLANCHE

-- Because Leroy wouldn't even want me to. At least, I don't think he would. And there it is right there -- after nineteen years of marriage -- I don't know.

(MORE)

BLANCHE (CONT'D)

I didn't know him, and he didn't know me...
and that's as interested in each other as
we ever got. I guess if you look at it,
that's too bad.

MARY

It's sad. (SHE BEGINS TO CRY AGAIN)

BLANCHE

But not necessarily unusual.

SFX: DOORBELL

(BLANCHE CROSSES TO THE DOOR, OPENS
IT. A YOUTHFUL MORTICIAN, NOT UNCTIOUS,
A JAYCEE, ENTERS, SPOTS MARY SOBBING,
MOVES DIRECTLY TO HER)

MORTICIAN

Ah, Mrs. Fedders -- my deepest condolences.

MARY

Oh, I'm not Mrs. Fedders. I'm Mrs. Hartman.
She's Mrs. Fedders.

MORTICIAN

(TO BLANCHE) Oh, I'm sorry -- my deepest
condolences. (THEN TO MARY) I just thought
since you were the lady in tears --

MARY

That I was the widow? No. I'm just the
lady who killed him.

MORTICIAN

Oh, I see.

(MORE)

MORTICIAN (CONT'D)

(THEN AGAIN TO BLANCHE) Mrs. Fedders, I just want you to know how many messages of sympathy we've received on behalf of the coach. It's quite a tribute to the man.

MARY

(EMOTIONAL AGAIN) He was a lovely man.

MORTICIAN

And in the spirit of all those tributes, I know you'll want the finest for your late husband.

BLANCHE

(EYES NARROWING) The little money I have coming is going to be necessary for me to live on so don't butter me up, and don't try to sell me anything!! (SHE MOVES AWAY IN ANGER)

MARY

(ASIDE) She's in shock. Don't worry, she'll probably go deep into debt like everyone else when they're bereaved.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREESCENE 1SAME, IMMEDIATELY

MARY

Blanche!

MORTICIAN

Mrs. Fedders, I assure you --

BLANCHE

I want the simplest, most economical
funeral you have.

MORTICIAN

You don't mean that. She can't mean that.

MARY

I'm sure she doesn't.

MORTICIAN

Mrs. Fedders, an event like this comes
once in a lifetime -- in later years you'll
be happy.

BLANCHE

That I spent as little as possible. Now
what about coffins...

MORTICIAN

Caskets. Well, I was going to suggest
Imperial Rest --

MARY

Oh, that's always nice.

MORTICIAN

Which is brass and African Ebony --

BLANCHE

What do you have in pine or sturdy synthetics?

MORTICIAN

Lined or unlined?

MARY

Lined -- she means lined, of course.

MORTICIAN

Well, we have model 22J, basically aluminum, two hundred and nineteen dollars.

BLANCHE

Is there anything less expensive?

MORTICIAN

No.

BLANCHE

I'll take it.

MORTICIAN

Slumber room facilities. We can offer flowers, musical atmosphere, any number of ushers you desire, genuine leather guest book --

BLANCHE

No slumber room. Closed coffin.

MORTICIAN

Casket. There is also food and drink available.

BLANCHE

Coffee and punch, no food.

MORTICIAN

Funeral cortege?

BLANCHE

No extra cars, just a hearse for the coffin --

MORTICIAN

Casket.

BLANCHE

Not a Cadillac with frills.

MORTICIAN

You want the... (WRITING) Dodge.

(POINTEDLY) It's a '73.

BLANCHE

Fine.

MARY

But Blanche, I mean for a one-time only event... a Dodge, really.

BLANCHE

Mary, please, I am not unprepared. Last night after I straightened the dresser, I read up on funerals and how widows especially are soaked --

MORTICIAN

Mrs. Fedders, please --

BLANCHE

The day after the funeral is the one I'm worried about. That's an 'event' for someone who's still alive! Come on, Mary!

SHE EXITS.

MARY

(AFTER BLANCHE LEAVES) Put him in the Cadillac hearse. I'll pay the difference. I hope you don't think this is erratic behavior, but as I told my friend, I've never been responsible for a death before.

SHE EXITS. HOLD ON MORTICIAN.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2SHUMWAY KITCHEN, LATER

CATHY AND STEVE ARE IN A PASSIONATE EMBRACE.

CATHY

(AS THEY BREAK) I'm gonna miss you so much.

STEVE INDICATES HE DOESN'T HAVE TO LEAVE YET.

CATHY (CONT'D)

There's still time?

STEVE NODS, TAKES HER IN HIS ARMS AGAIN. THEY ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF EMBRACE WHEN MARTHA ENTERS BACK DOOR AFTER PAYING A CONDOLENCE CALL ON BLANCHE.

MARTHA

Don't mind me, children. Go right ahead
with what you're doing.

THEY REMAIN IN THE EMBRACE. MARTHA
BABBLER ON AS SHE POURS HERSELF A CUP
OF COFFEE.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Blanche is holding up like a trooper.
I don't know how she does it. If
anything happened to your father, I'd
be a wreck. Just like poor Mary. She's
taking it very hard. Worse than Blanche
almost. Do you know what she said to
me? She said she felt like a murderer.
Isn't that terrible? I said it just
wasn't so. But she said maybe it wasn't
premeditated murder but it certainly
felt like manslaughter since she provided
the murder weapon. But I don't think you
can call chicken soup a weapon. I mean
it's never hurt anybody before. (BEAT)
Cathy?

CATHY

(COMING OUT OF THE EMBRACE) Yes, Mom?

MARTHA

Won't Steve miss his plane?

CATHY

We're watching the time.

MARTHA

Well, I don't see how you can with your eyes closed.

STEVE SAYS COME TO NEW YORK WITH ME.

CATHY

Steve, I can't go with you. There isn't time and besides...

STEVE SAYS HE'LL TAKE A LATER FLIGHT.

CATHY (CONT'D)

No, Steve. We've been all through this. I can't go.

STEVE ASKS WHY.

CATHY

You know why.

MARTHA

I don't.

CATHY

Mom, he's going to meet all those important publishing types; he's going to Twenty-One and be interviewed and get his picture in Time Magazine and I'd just be in the way. I also don't have anything to wear and I wouldn't know what to say and I'd just feel dumb and out of place.

STEVE PROTESTS.

MARTHA

You have perfectly lovely clothes, Cathy. And a lovely personality, too. (TO STEVE) Doesn't she have a lovely personality, Steve?

STEVE AGREES.

CATHY

I'm not going and that's final. And you'd better make tracks if you want to make that flight, Steve.

STEVE WANTS TO SAY SOMETHING, FIRST.

CATHY (CONT'D)

What, Steve? What do you want to say?

STEVE SAYS THAT WHETHER OR NOT SHE COMES, IT DOESN'T MATTER. SHE BELONGS TO HIM.

CATHY

(MOVED) And I belong to you, too... forever.

STEVE SAYS THEY'LL GET MARRIED AS SOON AS HE GETS BACK.

MARTHA

What's he saying?

CATHY

We're going to get married as soon as he gets back.

MARTHA

Isn't that sweet? I'm so happy for both of you.

STEVE KISSES MARTHA, PICKS UP HIS BAG. CATHY WALKS TO THE DOOR WITH HIM.

CATHY

(SIGN LANGUAGE AS SHE SAYS IT) I love you.

STEVE SAYS IT BACK. A FINAL KISS. HE HANDS HER A PIECE OF PAPER, EXITS.

CATHY (CONT'D)

(READING) I want to wake up warm in your arms and see again the topless towers of Ilium. I'll tarry not in alien rooms, but hurry back to lie again with you.

MARTHA

That's very beautiful -- I think. It doesn't rhyme, but it's still beautiful.

CATHY

He's coming back, Mom. No matter who he meets in New York, he's coming back to me.

MARTHA

Well, of course he's coming back. Which reminds me. I still haven't reached your father. (SHE CROSSES TO PHONE, DIALS A LONG DISTANCE NUMBER) Mr. George Shumway, please.

INTERCUT WITH GEORGE'S SMALL HOTEL ROOM. GEORGE IS TRYING TO BRUSH HIS HAIR WITH A MILITARY BRUSH AS HE TALKS.

GEORGE

Hello?

MUSIC FROM RADIO

MARTHA

Hello, Daddy. It's me. Martha.

GEORGE

I recognized your voice.

MARTHA

I have some sad news, dear. ... Uh, what's all that noise? Is there a party in your room?

GEORGE

What sad news, Martha? Is it Cathy? What?

MARTHA

It's Leroy Fedders. He passed away.

GEORGE

No fooling.

MARTHA

It was a terrible tragedy, George. He had this bad cold and he couldn't sleep and he took a lot of sleeping pills and he drowned in a bowl of chicken soup.

GEORGE

(ANXIOUS TO GET HER OFF) Uh-huh, terrible. Terrible. Is that all?

MARTHA

Isn't that enough? George, are you having some kind of party?

GEORGE

It's just the radio, Martha.

MARTHA

Oh. Well, I just wanted to tell you about poor Leroy and find out how you are.

GEORGE

I'm fine, Martha. I'll be home in a couple of days.

MARTHA

Well, take care of yourself.

GEORGE

(IMPATIENT) Yeah, yeah... give my love to Mary and Cathy... can't talk too long, it's long distance, you know. Goodbye.

HE HANGS UP AND WE STAY WITH HIM AS HE MOVES TO THE DRESSER AND PICKS UP THE SECOND MILITARY BRUSH AND SLICKS DOWN HIS HAIR. HE'S EXCITED AND A LITTLE NERVOUS. HE SPLASHES OLD SPICE ON HIS FACE... TRIES A LITTLE UNDER HIS ARMS AND WHEREVER ELSE. AND THEN THERE'S THE EXPECTED KNOCK ON THE DOOR. HE OPENS IT. A NICE-LOOKING CALL GIRL IS THERE.

SHERI

Mr. Shumway?

GEORGE

(VERY TENTATIVELY) Uh -- yeah -- Shumway -- that's me.

SHERI

My name's Sheri.

GEORGE

Well, uh...

SHE ENTERS.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Yeah -- you just come right in... uh...

GEORGE CLOSES THE DOOR, STARES AT HER, INCREASINGLY HESITANT.

FADE OUT.

ACT FOURGEORGE'S HOTEL ROOM, IMMEDIATELY
FOLLOWING

IT IS A VERY TENTATIVE AND OUT-OF-PLACE GEORGE WHO IS STRUGGLING TO ACT LIKE HE'S SOMEWHAT IN CHARGE. SHERI IS LOOKING AROUND.

SHERI

(A LITTLE WRYLY)

They sure give all you big shots the best suites, don't they?

GEORGE

Actually my suite wasn't ready. The -- uh -- guy who has it had some kind of a -- uh -- heart attack and they didn't want to move him. So I'll be moving in there first thing tomorrow.

SHERI

Sure you will. (SHE LOOKS AT HIM AND SOFTENS) What the hey, you seem like a nice old guy. How come you weren't surprised when you found me at the door?

GEORGE

Surprised? Why should I be surprised?

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Old Bud Delaplane kind of told me not to lock my door too tight tonight, if you know what I mean.

SHERI

Bud who??

GEORGE

Come on, he's the only guy who could have sent you up here! That old son-of-a-gun!

SHERI

(PLAYING ALONG, OBVIOUSLY JUST STOPPING SHORT OF A FAUX PAS) Yeah! That old son-of-a-gun, Bud Delaphone.

GEORGE

Delaplane.

SHERI

Whatever. A-a-a-anyway... here we are -- just the two of us.

SHE CROSSES TO THE DOOR AND MAKES SURE IT'S LOCKED.

GEORGE

(HESITANTLY) You want the door unocked?

SHERI

Why not? We don't plan to do anything we would be ashamed of, do we? I mean, you know, two consenting adults in the privacy of their own hotel room and all that legal pizazz.

GEORGE

Yeah, but --

SHERI

Don't be afraid, hon. I've got this thing about fires in hotel rooms. (SHE SITS DOWN AND PATS THE PLACE BESIDE HER) Are you married, hon?

GEORGE

Uh -- not necessarily. What I mean is -- sure -- but we think of it more as -- oh, I don't know -- (THEN QUICKLY) How about you? Are you married?

SHERI

No. I used to be married but I didn't like it. Not marriage itself. It was just this particular marriage. (PATs THE PLACE NEXT TO HER AGAIN) Come on now, hon, sit down so we can get to know each other better.

GEORGE

(SITTING VERY TENTATIVELY) Speaking of getting to know each other better, there's one thing I wanted to ask you.

SHERI

How did I happen to get started in the business?

GEORGE

Well, I'll be darned! You a mind-reader or something?

SHERI

No. I just know a curious mind when I meet one. You see, I just love curious people. (SHE STARTS LOOSENING HIS TIE) And you, hon, are one of the most curious men I have ever met.

GEORGE

(STUMBLING OVER HIMSELF) I'll be damned. You really mean that?

SHERI

With all my heart, hon. You getting a little nervous?

GEORGE

Me, nervous? Don't make me laugh. (HE LAUGHS)

SHERI

My, but you have big hands -- and I do like a man with big hands.

GEORGE

My father had big hands. Sometimes I look down at my hands and I think they're my father's. Know what I mean?

SHERI

No, I don't know, hon. It's really too deep for me. You're so much more curious than I am. (SHE STANDS UP) It's getting kind of warm in here, isn't it?

GEORGE

Warm? No, it seems fine to me.

SHERI

(TAKING OFF HER DRESS) Oooh, that is so much better!

GEORGE

(VERY NERVOUS) Say, I thought you wanted to talk first -- get to know each other better...

SHERI

We did that. You're the kind of man a woman feels she knows in ten minutes.
(LOOKS AT HER WATCH) And speaking of ten minutes -- that's when I'm due at the Ramada Inn.

GEORGE

(QUICKLY, RELIEVED) Well, I wouldn't want you to be late on my account.

SHERI

I won't be more than a few minutes late. The Ramada Inn's only around the corner.
(LOOKS HIM UP AND DOWN) And this can't take too long.

GEORGE

You'd be surprised. I know I'm not a kid but I need an hour. At least an hour. Sometimes two.

SFX: PHONE RINGS

AS GEORGE PICKS IT UP:

SHERI

Don't answer.

GEORGE

(ANSWERING) Hello? Bud? Jeez, Bud, we were just talking about you. (TO SHERI) It's Bud.

SHERI

Hang up.

GEORGE

(INTO PHONE) No, Bud, I was talking to Sheri. The girl you sent up. What do you mean you didn't send anyone up? (HE STARES AT SHERI) You couldn't reach her to tell her about me? Then who is -- ?

SHERI

George, come here.

GEORGE

I don't understand! She said --

SHERI SUDDENLY THROWS HER ARMS AROUND GEORGE'S NECK, KISSING HIM. AT THAT MOMENT THE DOOR BREAKS OPEN. MAN ABOUT GEORGE'S AGE ENTERS QUICKLY WITH A POLAROID CAMERA.

SWEENEY

Okay, Shumway, smile!

GEORGE

Sweeney! Why you dirty -- !

THE FLASHBULB FLASHES.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Oh, no!

SWEENEY

Just remember this when the union election comes up! (HE SNAPS ANOTHER PICTURE. THEN ANOTHER QUICKLY) Maybe you'll think a second time about running for office.

HE EXITS. GEORGE STANDS THERE ABSOLUTELY DUMBFOUNDED.

SHERI

(PUTTING ON HER DRESS) I'm sorry about this, hon. I really am. A girl's got to get by somehow and it's a jungle out there.

SHE SLIPS AROUND GEORGE AND EXITS.
GEORGE JUST STANDS THERE.

FADE OUT.

END EPISODE #41